

# South Dakota National Guard

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **SD National Guard Soldier awarded Medal for Valor**

RAPID CITY, S.D. – A South Dakota National Guard Soldier was awarded the SDNG Medal for Valor Saturday, Dec. 6, for heroism displayed while assisting a victim in a fatal car crash.

Sgt. Nathan Darrach, of Sturgis, was presented the award for taking action to ensure the safety of others involved in a three-vehicle accident along Interstate 90, near Summerset, Feb. 8.

Darrach witnessed the collision and immediately stopped to assist those involved.

“I just reacted. I was raised to help someone when they’re in need,” said Darrach. “I knew I needed to do whatever I could to help anyone that was injured.”

Darrach rushed to check on one of the victims, Darrol Birk, 59, of Rapid City, who suffered a severe injury and whose vehicle started on fire.

“Sgt. Darrach came to my truck, assisted me and checked out my injuries. My right foot was badly injured and I couldn’t get out of my truck, which caught fire,” said Birk. “An unknown man also came to assist after checking on a woman in another vehicle whom he reported didn’t survive the crash.”

According to Birk, Darrach and the unidentified person, forced open the badly damaged door on the vehicle and assisted him to safety. Darrach continued to evaluate Birk for injuries until medical professionals arrived, he said.

“I want to thank Sgt. Darrach for being there and for caring for his fellow man enough to risk his own safety to assist me in my time of need,” said Birk, a retired U.S. Army first sergeant and 21-year veteran. “This was a great act of kindness and needed aid on the part of both men at the site of a very violent crash. He is the kind of Soldier I would want with me in combat, knowing he would risk his safety to help his fellow Soldier and man.”

“It feels good to help anyone, no matter what the situation is,” said Darrach. “All of our training in the National Guard has made it easier to put myself in harm’s way to help others.”

“It feels great to have had the chance to help Mr. Birk and knowing that his recovery is going well,” continued Darrach. “I wish there was something that could have been done for the other driver.”

Darrach, a member of Joint Force Headquarters in Rapid City, was presented the award in front Birk and his fellow Soldiers during a unit drill assembly. The award was presented by Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, the adjutant general of the SDNG.

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The SDNG Medal for Valor is awarded to any individual who, while a member of the SDNG, distinguishes themselves by heroism – not involving actual conflict with an armed enemy – while in the Armed Forces of the United States and performing normal civilian functions and/or duties.

“There is no doubt in my mind that everyone else wearing this uniform would have done the same thing,” said Darrach. “I just happened to be in the right place at the right time.”

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High resolution photos are available at [www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard](http://www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard)



**120614-Z-GT719-004:** Army Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, the adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard, presents the South Dakota National Guard Medal for Valor to Army Sgt. Nathan Darrach, of Joint Force Headquarters, Dec. 6, 2014, in Rapid City, S.D., for heroism displayed while assisting a victim in a fatal three-vehicle crash. Darrach, of Sturgis, was presented the award for assisting an injured man in a burning vehicle along Interstate 90, near Summerset, Feb. 8. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Heather Trobee/Released)



**120614-Z-GT719-018:** Army Sgt. Nathan Darrach, of Joint Force Headquarters, stands with Darrol Birk and Birk's girlfriend, Brenda Nelson, after being presented the South Dakota National Guard Medal for Valor, Dec. 6, 2014, in Rapid City, S.D., for heroism displayed while assisting Birk in a fatal three-vehicle crash. Darrach, of Sturgis, was presented the award for helping the injured Birk in a burning vehicle along Interstate 90, near Summerset, Feb. 8. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Heather Trobee/Released)



**120614-Z-GT719-008:** Army Sgt. Nathan Darrach, of Joint Force Headquarters, is presented the South Dakota National Guard Medal for Valor, Dec. 6, 2014, in Rapid City, S.D., for heroism displayed while assisting a victim in a fatal three-vehicle crash. Darrach, of Sturgis, was presented the award for helping an injured man in a burning vehicle along Interstate 90, near Summerset, Feb. 8. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Heather Trobee/Released)

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